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SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 14 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 7 March 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union on Albania.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 38 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) N. H. BIEGMAN
Permanent Representative
of the Netherlands to the
United Nations

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 7 March 1997 by the Presidency of the European Union on Albania

1. On the occasion of his visit to Albania the President of the Council of the European Union, Mr. Hans van Mierlo, expressed great concern at the situation in the country and its possible implications for the region. While recognizing the need to restore law and order and deploring the violence that has occurred, the European Union expects maximum self-restraint from all sides and urges that further violence be avoided. The European Union calls firmly upon the Albanian authorities and all other parties to respect human rights, including minority rights, and fundamental freedoms consistent with Albania's international obligations. A state of public emergency should not be used to subvert those rights or the democratic order and the Union expects it to be lifted as soon as possible. The Albanian authorities are expected to maintain freedom of expression and freedom of information and to stop harassment of the foreign and national media. The opposition also has responsibilities. We support the recommendation of the Council of Europe that the opposition should, out of respect for democratic principles, take its seats and participate in the work of Parliament.

2. The European Union urges the Albanian authorities to ensure the security of foreign citizens in Albania and to cooperate with European Union member States responsible for their well-being.

3. The European Union calls upon Albanian political forces to engage in dialogue, to work together in a responsible manner to solve the present crisis as soon as possible and to establish a government which enjoys broad support. The Union recognizes the need for political and social stability if democratic processes are to be assured. It condemns all attempts by threat or use of arms to undermine stability or seize power and calls on all political forces in Albania also to condemn and seek to prevent such activity. At the same time the Union believes that a parallel process to promote national reconciliation is necessary, leading to a perspective of fresh parliamentary elections and a new constitution.

4. The European Union welcomes the decision of the current Chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send a personal representative of Albania and urges Albania, as a member of OSCE, to cooperate fully with his mission. It is the Union's conviction that OSCE has an essential role to play to achieve peaceful reconciliation in Albania. The Union stands ready to support OSCE in this endeavour.

In this context, the Union welcomes the steps taken by the Council of Europe and asks OSCE and the Council of Europe to work closely together in order to reinforce democracy in Albania.

5. The European Union welcomes the planned mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and urges the Government of Albania to reach agreement on ways of ending the present crisis, controlling the investment schemes and restoring economic well-being on the basis of an agreed IMF programme.

6. The European Union, recalling the Council's conclusions of 24 February, confirms its readiness to continue its current assistance to Albania within the PHARE programme, including specific measures aiming at alleviating the present situation in Albania. In addition, the Union is of course ready to provide humanitarian aid should this become necessary. The Union is however concerned that the implementation of the existing trade and cooperation relationship with Albania is suffering and that the PHARE programme is also negatively affected under the present circumstances. Once political and economic conditions are right, the Union is ready to consider the strengthening of relations with Albania within the context of its regional approach and with a view to promoting stability in the region.

7. The European Union has always given strong support to the creation of a democratic Albania. It continues to support that goal. But this requires acceptance by Albania of the principles and practices of democracy.

8. The central and eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.